

# 2007 Report from the Legislature

## To the constituents of the 4th Legislative District

### Rep. Larry Crouse

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- Commerce & Labor
- Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government & Audit Review
- Select Committee on Pension Policy

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**In this newsletter:**

- State budget update
- Alert to parents – WASL changes and state-mandated sex-ed on the way
- Health care update
- Important public safety information



June 2007

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

A challenging 2007 legislative session has come to a close. This year the Democrats held wide majorities in the House and Senate, as well as the governor's office. But, despite our being in the minority, we were able to work with the Democrat majority to make much-needed improvements in several areas of public policy. Together we passed a rainy-day fund, added tougher penalties for auto thieves, made improvements in school safety, and passed other legislation that will benefit the citizens of our state.

Though we are happy with these accomplishments, many of the bills of importance to us and our district were voted down by the majority or simply not considered. We had hoped to make progress on some of the important problems facing our state: ensuring access to affordable health care, improving our education system, protecting our families and communities, making our state more business-friendly, and moving forward on construction of a "statewide" transportation system. Unfortunately, in our view, the Legislature came up short in too many of these areas.

This newsletter will give you a brief overview of some of the major bills that were passed by the Legislature this year.

If you would like additional information about anything mentioned here, or you have other comments or concerns, please give us a call or drop us an email. We appreciate hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Rep. Larry Crouse  
4th District

Rep. Lynn Schindler  
4th District

### Rep. Lynn Schindler

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# 2007

## To the constituents of the the 4th Legislative District



### ***State operating budget – takes Washington coffers from a surplus to a deficit***

For the first time in years legislative budget writers were in the enviable position of working with a \$2.2 billion budget surplus. We were hopeful budget writers would prioritize state spending, focus on core services of state government, save for a rainy day and invest taxpayer dollars wisely. Unfortunately, most of that didn't occur. Instead, the budget adopted by the Legislature spends more than the economy can support. The 2007-2009 operating budget increases spending by a whopping 15 percent over the previous budget, and adds 3,800 new employees to the state payroll.

**The governor's own budget office projected the \$2.2 billion budget surplus will turn into a \$1.3 billion deficit in few short years as a result of this new spending level.** This budget could force the Legislature to come back in a few years and either cut services or raise taxes. We didn't support this irresponsible approach to budgeting. We would have taken the opportunity to invest in important one-time needs like paying down the multibillion-dollar unfunded pension liability. It is a promise the state must keep and this was the perfect time to put money back into the pension fund.

### ***Constitutional rainy-day fund makes it to the November ballot***

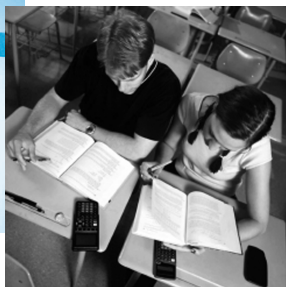


On a positive note, it took several years but we were finally successful in adopting legislation that will ask voters to create a constitutionally protected rainy-day fund. The goal of the rainy-day fund is to protect taxpayers during economic downturns by requiring 1 percent of state revenue to be diverted into the fund and only allowing the money to be used during difficult economic times and emergencies.



***Rep. Crouse speaks to members of the  
House in support of a constitutionally  
protected rainy-day fund.***





## **Alert to parents: state-mandated sex education on the way!**

The Legislature passed a controversial measure which will completely take away parental and local control over sex education in our public schools.

Senate Bill 5297 prohibits schools from teaching abstinence-only education and requires school districts to teach a sex education curriculum that is consistent with guidelines developed by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the state Department of Health.

The proposed curriculum exposes children to graphic sexual materials that many parents may find objectionable. It's troubling that parents, teachers and local school districts won't be allowed any input into what our kids are learning in their sex education classes.

## **Mandatory paid family leave**



The Legislature passed a bill that will force all employers **to provide up to five weeks of paid family leave upon the birth or adoption of a child.** Employees would not get their regular salary while away – they would get \$250 a week. In

addition, employers would be required to keep the job open until they return – a provision that could prove highly burdensome to a small business. Employers would also be burdened with the administration of this new program.

It's a very expensive plan that benefits only relatively few workers. It's worrisome that a government program was created without a plan in place to pay for it when it takes effect in 2009.

*Rep. Schindler serves as a member of the House Republican leadership team in her role as Republican Whip.*



## **Washington Assessment of Student Learning**

The governor said education would be her top priority. We had high hopes as we began the session. Unfortunately, education didn't fare as well as we'd hoped. The Washington Assessment of Student Learning, the standard by which we measure students' academic achievement, was weakened instead of strengthened this session. Additionally, the majority party's operating budget fails to adequately fund the basic fundamental needs like transportation, books and special education. Students deserve better than this; we will be back next session to work to fund the basics in the supplemental budget.

The legislature postponed until 2013 passage of the math and science portion of the WASL as a graduation requirement. We question the wisdom of prioritizing a statewide sex education curriculum ahead of a statewide math and science curriculum.

# 4<sup>th</sup> District

Rep. Larry Crouse  
Rep. Lynn Schindler

# 2007 To the constituents of the the 4th Legislative District

## **Capital budget provides funding for local projects**

The 2007-2009 capital budget passed by the Legislature will provide more than \$5 million in funding for local projects. Money from the capital budget funds the construction and repair of public buildings and other long-term investments such as land acquisitions and transfers. It also includes state money that is either given, or lent to local governments or nonprofit organizations for infrastructure, housing, and cultural and heritage facilities. We are pleased with the number of local projects which were included in the final budget to pass the Legislature.

### **Dept. of Community, Trade and Economic Development**

Mirabeau Point Children's Universal Park.....\$800,000

### **Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation**

Green Acres Neighborhood Park Acquisition.....\$306,175

Newman Lake Fishing Dock.....\$250,000

Pincroft Natural Area Preserve 2006.....\$172,000

Antoine Peak Acquisition.....\$1,421,750

### **Department of Ecology**

Minor Works.....\$270,000

### **Department of Fish and Wildlife**

Spokane Region One Office - Phase 2.....\$1,830,000

**Spokane Valley Community Center**.....\$250,000

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**Total 4th Legislative District.....\$5,299,925**